

## **ARGONNE SITE OFFICE**

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS**

#### **I. Purpose and Need for Public Participation**

One of the purposes of the NEPA process is to involve the public in the environmental decision making process, and to inform the public of federal agency decisions that potentially affect the environment. The DOE NEPA regulations (10 CFR 1021) that implement the Department's NEPA process require that DOE inform the host states and tribes of determinations to prepare environmental assessments (EAs), as well as offer the states and tribes the opportunity to review draft EAs prior to the final determination on whether to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The June 13, 1994, Secretarial Policy Statement on NEPA also encourages the Department to provide enhanced opportunities for public involvement in the EA process.

The Argonne Site Office (ASO) Quality Assurance Plan for EAs discusses quality decisions as one of the outputs or products resulting from the NEPA process. It states further that quality decisions are those that benefit from public involvement. The public review of draft EAs is one check upon the design and scope of the EA document, its process, and the proposed determination that an EIS is not required. The public review of EAs also provides an independent assessment of the EA process and provides feedback over time on the performance of the SC NEPA system.

#### **II. Public Participation Process**

The public participation process is applicable to all EAs prepared under the purview of ASO. The process will consist of those elements required by the DOE NEPA regulations (10 CFR 1021), as well as additional opportunities for public review and input, as appropriate. These elements and opportunities are summarized below.

A. Notice of EA Determinations. As required by the DOE NEPA regulations, 10 CFR 1021.301(c), notification of the host states/tribes of DOE's intent to prepare an EA will be made in a timely manner following an ASO NEPA determination, usually within two weeks.

B. Discussions with Host States/Tribes. After the notification and internal scoping processes have been completed, the host state and tribes may be contacted by telephone to inform them of the results of internal scoping and to discuss the nature of the proposed action. This would be expected to occur for larger projects or proposals that may be unusual or of special interest to the states or tribes. If this is done, the host states/tribes should be queried on any environmental issues relevant to the EA process. The persons contacted should be those who ultimately will review the draft EA during the state/tribal coordination process. The process of contacting the host states/tribes should be conducted by the NEPA Document Manager or the NEPA Compliance Officer (NCO).

C. Formal Host State/Tribal Coordination. As required by the DOE NEPA regulations, 10 CFR 1021.301(d), formal host state/tribal coordination for the review of EAs will occur prior to the final determination by the ASO Manager on whether to prepare an EIS. Such coordination will be via a letter signed by the ASO Site Manager that includes the EA as an attachment.

D. Public Review of Draft EAs. The Secretarial Policy on NEPA of June 1994 states that NEPA Document Managers will take appropriate action to encourage and facilitate public participation in the NEPA process. This includes providing opportunities for interested or affected parties to

review ASO Draft EAs concurrent with the state/tribal reviews, prior to DOE's final threshold determination on the EA. ASO will make Draft EAs available for comment to Federal and state agencies consulted with for the proposed action and other agencies or organizations that may have an interest in the proposed action. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County will be provided copies of Draft EAs for proposed actions at Argonne-East.

The EA process for some ASO proposed actions might benefit from enhanced public involvement opportunities. These will be planned and implemented by the NEPA Document Manager working with the CH Office of Communications. Information meetings or workshops on the proposal may be held in the vicinity of the host site during the time when the EA is under state/tribal and public review. Draft EA's may be placed on the DOE CH web site and press releases may be issued to publicize availability of Draft EAs.

F. Availability of EA and FONSI. As required by the DOE NEPA regulations, 10 CFR 1021.322(c), when an EA process results in issuance of a FONSI, the public will be informed of the availability of the EA and FONSI. This will be conducted by the NEPA Document Manager working with the CH Office of Communications.